

Mourning

Chap. XIV

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765 When a man dies, the widow has to seclude herself from all for a period of four months and ten days. Well-to-do families confine the wife to the house for this period while Badawin women hide themselves as much as practicable in their tents. The townswoman of Kuwait actually shuts herself in a room, devoid of comforts such as carpets, etc., and can only be attended by another woman who brings her food and water. She must not see a man, or male relative, or hear a male voice.

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765 Among the lower classes the belief about this 'ade or custom of shutting the widow up is, that as soon as a man dies and goes to the other world, he is chained by an iron chain round his neck. This chain can only be removed by his widow's observing a proper course of mourning, for four months and ten days.

The very poor classes in Kuwait do not pay much attention to the above rule, and forty days' seclusion generally meets the case with them.

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776 Graveyards are always looked upon as places of ill-omen and must be avoided, especially at night, as *jinn* or spirits are believed to be moving about them.

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776 The great western graveyard at Kuwait, where the shaikhs bury their dead, is especially notorious for *jinn*, and many an eerie tale is told of people who have dared to go too near the place and have been pursued and even attacked by these evil spirits.

It is particularly bad to put your foot on a grave, and to do so after dark often results in so-called "madness". When young Muslug bin Majid al A'aga of the Mutair at Jariya went mad for the love of a lady (see page 149) many said, and he himself is supposed to have believed, that he had accidentally set foot on a Badawin grave when he went out of his tent after dark to attend to nature.

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761 Among the Badawin the person dying usually passes away peacefully in grave and dignified manner; this especially applies to the old. I was present at the death of one of Shaikh Hillal bin Fajr'an al Mutairi's Badawin relatives, a poor man of over eighty. I was camped at Aratjan among my Badawin friends Salim al Mutairi's family, and the old man's tent was close by. Salim was away in Najd when the old man suddenly collapsed and gave out that his time had come. There were only women and children about and the Dhafiri camel

Unmarked Graves

Chap. XIV

visit the grave of a dead relative once he has been buried. Even the ⁶ ₂₉ shaikhs' graves suffer like neglect, and in the great cemetery between the Naif gate and the Jahrah gate inside the wall, few can point out the graves of Shaikhs Mubarak, Jabir and Salim, the last three Rulers of the principality. There is nothing at all to distinguish their tombs from those of any man and woman who has been buried in the same place. It is interesting to know that Shaikhs Muhammad and Jarrah, slain by Shaikh Mubarak, lie in the *Safir* or Market Square of Kuwait with nothing to indicate their burial place but a few stones flush with the ground.

The washing of dead bodies in Kuwait is carried out by a regular ^k ₇₄ body-washer (*ghassaf*), male or female as the case may be, who is immediately sent for on a death taking place. This person is very business-like and gets to work at once. Persian (*Shi'ah*) men are washed in a room adjoining the mosque, while women are taken to special buildings provided for this purpose. The body-washer places the nude body on a large wooden table and pours water over it in quantities. Then with a gauntlet of coarse wool which he puts on his hands, he scrubs the corpse all over with soap and water, scouring it over and over again with copious douches of water. After this procedure he dries the body well, and dresses it up in its new white cotton shroud, or perhaps assists members of the family to do this. For preference the washing is done after dark, but this is not obligatory.

Among the Badawin when a woman's husband dies, the widow ⁸ ₇₅ keeps herself shut up in her tent, and wears a green undergarment. She goes out only when all strange men are out of sight; she must cover her hands and feet with a sort of glove and sock when she moves with her family; this is known as *haddad* or *haddin* (*tahaddad* or *tahaddin*—she is mourning). ₂₉₂

OTHER INTERESTING POINTS CONNECTED WITH A BADAWIN DEATH ⁸

- (a) In the desert water is usually dropped into the mouth of a person ⁷⁴³ ₇₄₄ about to die.
- (b) The eyes of the dead person are not closed as in the West.
- (c) The Badawin greatly dislikes having to bury his own dead. If he can, he will get some non-Badawin, a settled Arab for instance, if one is

The Badawin Paradise

Chap. XIV

763
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at hand, to do the work for him. Similarly, to touch a dead body is revolting to him.

(d) A woman's grave must be deep enough to hide her bones if she were placed upright.

(e) A man's grave need be only 4 feet deep, i.e. up to a man's middle, or his knees, if there is no time to bury him properly.

(f) No woman ever accompanies a dead man's funeral procession, and as few persons as possible attend any actual burial. This is unlike the *Asafir* (town) custom, when friends all go to see a man buried, and vie with each other to carry the body, if only for a few seconds.

765

(g) Up to the third day after a man's death his friends visit his son and console with him by quoting various regular forms of comforting phrases,* such as: "He was a good man, and this has happened from Allah." "It happens to all men and to all people born of woman." "May Allah replace him who has passed away." If a man has lost his son the words "may Allah grant you another son in his place", etc., *Allah yaddif 'alaih* are used. The man consoled with will reply, "Thanks be to Allah, Allah is omnipotent".

The Badawin's idea of Heaven or Paradise is simple and pleasing and I have often discussed this subject with him.

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Paradise means to him a land where it is always spring (*rah*), with plentiful and permanent green grazing (*'ashid*), water flowing in abundance from springs and small rivulets, a place where no unpleasant things are met with such as are prevalent in this world (hunger, lack of water, dried-up pasture, camel disease, etc.).

In Paradise all a man's tribe live together in pastures green, he meets all his friends and relations. No one grows old—all live for ever. They marry and give in marriage, and every person has an extra large tent, large herds of camels and sheep and many children. Should a person have lost children in this world, he or she will meet them in Paradise, grown to the age they would have been if they had lived, and the children will welcome and greet their parents as at the end of a journey.

I once asked Amiba, wife of Salim al Musaiyin, if she would be Salim's wife in heaven, as she was here. She replied that she would know him and her children, and live close to him, and visit her children

* Such formulas of condolence are: (1) *Allah i 'aniam qidam* (when grown up he died, such as a son); (2) *Allah yaddif 'alaih* (for child's death); (3) *Allah i 'aniam qidam* (for women).